

ARE OUR TEENS SAVED? A YOUTH PASTOR'S TESTIMONY

June 5, 2000 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org) -- The following is from Kevin Stambaugh, Associate Pastor, Bible Baptist Temple, Euclid, Ohio --

Here is the story of how our youth department has changed in the last year. Please feel free to do anything you please with it.

I have been an assistant pastor working with the youth in our church for almost six years now. The first two years of my ministry in the church seemed to bear little fruit. The teenagers I inherited were all extremely worldly and today none of them are living for Christ and almost certainly lost. I recognized going in that this first group was probably a lost cause and that it would take years to turn the youth group around. I concentrated on the younger ones in the youth group and finally saw some of them turn around in the third year.

Last summer I entered in to the fourth year of working with the teenagers, I was seeing some great "success." For the first time in the twenty years of our church's existence we saw a teenager go to Christian college and another surrender to preach. Teenagers were beginning to work in children's ministries and learning how to serve the Lord. All in all I thought everything was going rather well considering where things started four years before.

A parent approached me and was concerned that there was something seriously wrong in our youth department. They were seeing things in their son that indicated that all was not well. The next Saturday I spent the day in prayer and meditation on the subject and the Holy Spirit really grabbed a hold of my heart. First of all I realized that I had become complacent and was no longer working as hard as I should have on my lessons. Secondly, I realized I was not praying for the teenagers as I should. And lastly, it suddenly became quite clear to me that most if not all of the teenagers in the group were truly not saved.

I began to correct the situation by sending out a letter to the teens and their parents apologizing for my own complacency. I promised to pray for each teenager every day. I also stated that I would be visiting each of them in their home and would directly ask them if they were saved. I started teaching from I John on Wednesday nights and Romans on Sunday mornings and I stressed the need for them to repent of their sins. Up until this point most of my lessons were teaching them how they should live after they were saved.

That summer three of the teenagers were saved even before I went to visit them; one was the son of the concerned parent. Each had come to realize that though

they had believed, they had never truly repented and submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. When I went to visit them, their parents stated that they had seen a great and miraculous change in their lives.

As I began to visit the other teenagers and ask them their testimonies, a pattern began to emerge. Almost without exception each teenager would say something like this. "I was in vacation bible school (Sunday school, etc.) and I realized I was not saved so I prayed and asked Jesus into my heart." I would then ask them if they had been scared of hell at the time and they would say, "Yes." The thing I noticed was that not one of them would say that they felt a great burden of sin. Once I heard their testimony I would tell them that it concerned me that they had nowhere mentioned a guilt for their sin and a decision to turn from it. I believe that my telling them this had a great influence on what has happened since. Since visiting them I have seen three more young people accept Christ. Each told me that when I questioned their salvation testimony, rather than accepting it as fact, it got them to thinking.

That is six teenagers saved in less than one year. This may not seem like a lot to many but we only have eight teenagers in our youth department.

I once heard a preacher from a large church with hundreds of young people in it ask the following question from the pulpit. "Why do so many of the teenagers go bad when they grow up in Christian homes and graduate from the Christian school?" I believe the answer is simple; most are not saved.

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